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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: DECEMBER 30, 2009

Summary: The aftermath of the terrorist attack in Karachi continues to dominate front-page news this morning. All major English dailies carried President Obama's statement on the failed U.S. airliner attack. "Dawn" carried the headline: "Terror havens in four states: US", focusing on his commitment to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat the violent extremists...whether they are from Afghanistan or Pakistan, Yemen or Somalia, or anywhere they are plotting attacks against the U.S. homeland." Media widely reported the Pakistani military spokesman's response to a Washington Post article alleging political and military leadership involvement in transfer of nuclear-related material to North Korea by Dr. A.Q. Khan in the 1990s. Newspapers highlighted President Zardari's comments in defense of Pakistan's democratic system and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif's remarks that there is no threat to Pakistan's democratic system and that his party will defend the present government if threats emerge. "The News" reported Sharif's statement warning the government against "growing U.S. influence" in Pakistan. Several papers carried the U.S. Embassy's condemnation of the Muharram procession attacks and two corrections rejecting fictitious reports published in The Nation. The reports alleged that a U.S. B-52 aircraft was seen hovering over FATA and that the U.S. is brokering a deal on the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan.

TOP STORIES

Obama Concedes 'Systemic Failure' In Anti-Terror Protection "The Nation" (12/30)

"U.S. President Barack Obama on Wednesday said that a 'systemic failure' occurred in the intelligence network ahead of the thwarted attack on a U.S.-bound flight from Amsterdam on Christmas Day. 'This is unacceptable,' he said and asked the authorities to submit to him a preliminary report on the failed attempt by a Nigerian national to blow up a North West Airlines plane on December 25."

News Story: Terror Havens In Four States: U.S. "Dawn" (12/30)

"U.S. President Barack Obama has identified Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia as the four places where terrorists were hatching plans to attack the United States. In a statement issued on Monday evening, Mr. Obama also vowed to track down the plotters behind the attempted Christmas Day aeroplane bombing attack. He said the attack was a serious reminder of the danger his nation faced."

News Story: Karachi In Grip Of Grief And Anger As Blast Toll Rises To 43 "Dawn" (12/30)

"A deep sense of grief and anger prevailed in Karachi on Tuesday as

victims of Monday's suicide attack on the main Ashura procession in the city were laid to rest and religious scholars made an impassioned plea for sectarian harmony and peace. The city was at a standstill with shops and markets, government offices and educational institutions closed and public and private transport off the road. At least 43 people were killed and 60 others injured when the bomber struck the procession on the M.A. Jinnah Road at about 4.15pm near the Light House area."

TERRORISM/MILITARY ISSUES

News Story: Zardari Confident Of Victory Over Militants "Dawn" (12/30)

"President Asif Ali Zardari has assured his U.S. supporters that his government is determined to carry on with the fight against militants until victory is achieved. 'We will not let militants violently impose their political agenda on the people,' Mr. Zardari wrote in an op-ed article in The Wall Street Journal."

News Story: Terrorists Working On Foreign Agenda: PM "The News" (12/30)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Tuesday said terrorists were working on a foreign agenda but the government had taken effective steps to crush them. He was talking to media persons after inaugurating a 100-unit Labor Housing Colony and distributing allotment letters of these houses among 100 laborers in Gwadar."

News Story: COAS Warns Against Airstrikes; Tripartite Commission Meeting "The Nation" (12/30)

"The Tripartite Commission comprising senior military representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan and coalition forces in Afghanistan held its 29th meeting in Kabul on Tuesday.... The participants showed satisfaction over the existing level of cooperation.... The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) raised the recent incidents of firing inside the Pakistani border and said that Pakistan's sovereignty should be respected and if the allied troops have any information of viable target inside Pakistan then they should share that information with the Pakistani authorities who would then take action themselves."

News Story: Pakistan Denies Transfer Of N-Material To N. Korea "Dawn" (12/30)

"Pakistan rejected on Tuesday allegations about involvement of the political and military leadership in transfer of nuclear-related material to North Korea by Dr A.Q. Khan in the 1990s. Jeffery Smith and Joe Warrick leveled the allegations in an article in Washington Post headlined "Pakistani scientists depicts more advanced nuclear program in North Korea", and claimed that these were based on 'a previously unpublicized account' by Dr Khan, implicating former President General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf, the current Chief of Strategic Plans Division General (Retd) Khalid Kidwai and other officials.... Military spokesman Maj-Gen Athar Abbas said there was no state-level connivance as had been alleged in the article."

News Story: U.S. Denies Its Bomber Violated Pakistani Airspace "Daily times," "Jang," "Nawa-i-Waqt," "Express," "Aaj-Kal," "Islam" (12/30)

"The U.S. Embassy on Tuesday denied a report published in a national daily on Monday, which claimed that a U.S. B-52 bomber aircraft was seen flying over Waziristan and the Kurram Agency over the past several weeks. 'These accusations are entirely baseless. No B-52 aircraft flew over North and South Waziristan or the Kurram Agency as alleged in the article,' the Embassy said in a statement."

News Story: Thirty Seven Militants, Four Levy Men Killed In Orakzai "Dawn" (12/30)

"Helicopter gunships shelled suspected Taliban positions in Anjani area of lower Orakzai Agency on Tuesday and killed 16 militants. The helicopters went into action after five volunteers of a tribal Lashkar and four levy personnel had been killed in clashes with militants in Chamjana area. Twenty-nine militants were killed in the clash, according to sources."

News Story: Mohmand Clashes Leave 7 Dead "Dawn" (12/30)

"Four children, a woman and two security personnel were killed in an exchange of fire and shelling in Mohmand tribal region on Monday and Tuesday."

News Story: Four NATO Oil Tankers Destroyed Near Sibi "Dawn" (12/30)

"Four oil tankers carrying fuel for NATO forces in Afghanistan were gutted by bomb blasts near Sibi on Tuesday. A driver was seriously injured in the explosions. An explosive device planted under a truck was defused by police, averting further damage, according to sources."

POLITICAL ISSUES

News Story: No Threat To Democratic System: Nawaz; Says He Wouldn't Accept U.S. Dictates "The News" (12/30)

"PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif said on Tuesday that there was no threat to the democratic system in the country and that his party would defend the government if such a situation emerged. 'We are ready to defend the government if any threat emerges. I believe the undemocratic attitude of the government and the 17th Amendment are the real challenges that the democratic system is facing,' he said while talking to reporters in Oghi town. Nawaz said the government should follow and implement the Charter of Democracy in letter and spirit to overcome all challenges.... He warned the government against the growing U.S. influence in the country."

News Story: U.S. Says It's Not Brokering Any Kashmir Deal "Daily Times," "Express" (12/30)

"The U.S. is not brokering any settlement between Pakistan and India to resolve the Kashmir dispute, the U.S. Embassy said on Tuesday. The embassy was responding to an article published in a local national daily on Monday, which stated that the U.S. Special Representative Ambassador Richard Holbrooke told an interviewer that the U.S. was brokering a deal on the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan."

ECONOMY/ENVIRONMENT

News Story: Pakistan Receives \$1.2bn Payment From IMF "Daily Times" (12/30)

"Pakistan has received \$1.2 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the fourth tranche of an emergency loan facility agreed upon last year, State Bank of Pakistan Chief spokesman Syed Wasimuddin said on Tuesday."

News Story: Over 10,000 Jobs, Rs30bn Lost To Arson In Karachi "Dawn" (12/30)

"Over 10,000 people have lost their jobs because of a blaze that gutted between 2,000 and 3,000 shops located between Light House and Boulton Market in the old city area on Monday, causing an estimated loss of Rs30 billion."

EDITORIALS/OPINIONS

Editorial: Karachi Attacks, an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (12/30)

"Karachi's city centre was still burning the day after a suicide attack on a Muharram procession claimed nearly 40 lives.... No one can say with certainty whether Monday's attack was motivated solely by sectarian hatred or if it is part of the wider menace of Taliban-inspired terrorism. Many seem inclined towards the latter view, arguing that the blast was aimed at provoking sectarian strife and opening up a new front to further destabilize a country that is already at war.... Still, the need for a united stand against terrorism cannot be emphasized enough. The physical fight must be complemented by moral resolve."

Editorial: Karachi Attack, an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (12/30)

"Public outrage and subsequent damage to businesses and property has served as an added problem for the security apparatus. It has yet to be established whether the public reaction was purely spontaneous or certain elements systematically carried out the rampage in order to inflict maximum damage, but the enormity of the loss of life and property is a grim reminder to the security agencies of their failings. There is literally no way a determined suicide bomber could be stopped from carrying out his mission. This kind of guerrilla warfare can only be fought through better intelligence and by infiltrating the enemy's networks and busting them from within. The government would be well advised to work on these lines if it is sincere in its efforts to defeat the hydra of militancy."

Editorial: Multiple Targets, an editorial in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (12/30)

"The bombing of the Ashura procession was, from the point of view of those who planned and resourced it, highly successful.... We may never know what the real intention of the attack was - whether it was to spark sectarian conflict or more broadly destabilize the city. Time will tell on both counts, but what is clear is that despite Karachi having thus far escaped the worst it is in reality as vulnerable as anywhere else. 'Foolproof' security exists only as a fantasy. The bombers know this and, they having left their calling card, we may be certain that they will be paying a return visit - 'foolproof' security or not."

Editorial: Tragic Madness, an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (12/30)

"It is understandable that the incidents, which hurt the religious sensitivities of a large section of the people, cannot fail to rouse fury and anger of the public and one should expect street protests, violent perhaps, to take place. But the aftermath of the suicide bombing at Karachi appeared to go beyond that limit; it looked to be well organized and pre-planned, as if the suicide and the rioters had some link."

Editorial: Bloody Mayhem In Karachi And Muzaffarabad; Understand Enemy's Design And Think Of Saving The Country, an editorial in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (12/30)

"Rulers' imprudence has pitted us against grave terrorism with our enemy taking advantage of our internal weaknesses. In view of the reports on nefarious activities of Indian intelligence agency RAW and American Blackwater the government needed to be vigilant.... It would have been appropriate for the government to stop the military operation in South Waziristan in reverence to Muharram thus giving the militants a message of peace and brotherhood."

Editorial: NATO's Failure In Afghanistan, an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (12/30)

"The NATO's admission that the Taliban have regained control over most of the provinces of Afghanistan is an evidence of the failure of Washington and its allies in this war. Now they are wasting dollars and the lives of their soldiers in Afghanistan only for face-saving. We think that the time has come for the general public in the U.S. and Europe to hold their rulers accountable over the wastage of their tax-money. In fact, only the ordinary citizens of these countries can prevent their governments from undertaking such futile adventures in the future."

Editorial: NATO in Afghanistan, an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (12/30)

"A NATO report has conceded that the Taliban have control of 33 of the country's 34 provinces, and practically are in government there.... This should be a more than sufficient indication to the Pakistan government that it has supported the United States too much and for too long. It needs a strong and stable Afghanistan more than NATO, and so it must ensure that the shape of a post-occupation Afghanistan is in place in advance of the inevitable departure of foreign forces from Afghanistan. The failure to do so when the USSR left Afghanistan led to the rise of the Taliban and the present imbroglio. As the United States and allied NATO forces are likely to

repeat the hastiness of their departure, Pakistan must be ready to see that the Afghan situation does not become harmful for it or the world."

Opinion: Decade Of Terror, an op-ed by Rafia Zakaria in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (12/30)

"Despite all these efforts countries large and small, weak and strong have failed to corner the non-state warrior who has remained impenetrable and largely unassailable. As warfare has moved away from the army barracks into the cave, the rented room and the abandoned warehouse the world is set to end the first decade of the millennium horrified by the terror unleashed but helpless against it."

Opinion: NATO Needs Afghan War, an op-ed by Farooq Sulehria in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (12/30)

"For a while, the Iraq war overshadowed the Afghan war. But not for long. And it is not merely the deterioration in the Afghan situation that Hindukush drew Washington's attention yet again. The Afghan theatre also provides the White House with an opportunity to discipline NATO allies as well as testing new East European mercenaries keen to enter NATO. It is of course Obama's political future at stake in Afghanistan that has prompted the recent surge of 30,000 U.S. troops. The U.S. hawks will make it impossible for Obama to run for the next term if he is seen as a dove."

Opinion: Psy War Against Pak Nukes, an op-ed by Dr. Raja M. Khan in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (12/30)

"Seeing the sensitive nature of the matter; it is expected that our allies must desist from passing irresponsible comments on the Pakistani nukes. The current phase of the psychological warfare against the Pakistani nukes must cease. Such reports indeed promote Indian view point, which considers a nuclear Pakistan as the biggest barrier in its super power ambitions."

Editorial: President Zardari's Speech Was Mere Perturbation, an editorial in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (12/30)

"Analysts and political leaders of the country think that President Zardari's speech on Benazir Bhutto's death anniversary did not behove of a dominant President and the head of a popular political party. According to them, the speech demonstrated agitation of mind and he appeared hurling threats on every institution including the army and judiciary.... This was a declaration of war kind of speech that could also be described as madness.... People think that due to governance failure and his weaknesses the PPP chief is bent upon giving reign of the country into the hands of undemocratic forces. On the other hand, the undemocratic hands are not willing to accept this offer; they want to give full opportunity to the democratic force."

Editorial: Protests in Iran, an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (12/30)

"The recent death of Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Montazeri, a reformist opposition religious leader, provided Iranian dissidents the opportunity to revive their protest. The government's poor handling of the crisis and the resultant anger has no doubt boosted the protest movement in Iran.... The support extended by the U.S. and some European powers has boosted the opposition's morale in Iran. But it has also given Mr. Ahmadinejad the pretext to dub the protest movement as foreign-inspired and crush dissension."

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson